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PRACTICE NOTE

Exercise Planning: South Carolina Emergency Management Division's Standard Operating Procedures Approach to Tabletop Exercises

PRACTICE

The South Carolina Emergency Management Division (SCEMD) applies a standard operating procedure (SOP)-based approach to tabletop exercises (TTX).

DESCRIPTION

The SCEMD exercise planning committee members noted that participant discussion sometimes strayed from the policies, procedures, and plans under evaluation. The team observed that participants called for responses that were inconsistent with their organizations' SOPs.

In September of 2005, the SCEMD determined that an SOP-review approach to TTXs could address this problem. Under this approach, the SCEMD requires that participants and evaluators keep a copy of their organizations' SOPs on hand during the TTX. As the exercise scenario unfolds, participants specify how they would react to the scenario and if those courses of action differ from the SOPs. Participants note differences in the margins of their SOPs, emergency response plans, or memoranda of understanding. Evaluators then confront the participants with the information, confirm the proper procedure, and document the observation with an [SOP Change Form](#). These forms serve as the primary source of information for improvement plans (IP) in the after-action report (AAR).

The SCEMD found that the SOP-based approach has facilitated evaluation of response plans and documents data for the IP and AAR.

CITATION

Batson, Steven. Manager, Weapons of Mass Destruction Training and Exercises, South Carolina Emergency Management Division. Interview with *Lessons Learned Information Sharing*. 23 Jun 2006.

South Carolina State Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program. *After Action Report: Lowcountry Region Tabletop Exercise*. 20 Jun 2006.

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